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## SOCIAL LIFE IN BRAZIL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

. . . l'histoire intime; c'est ce  
roman vrai que la posterité appellera  
peut-être un jour l'histoire humaine.  
—LES GONCOURTS.

The following essay is an attempt to make clear to myself what the Brazil of the middle of the nineteenth century was like or, to use Walter Pater's words when asked what he studied history for, to know "how people lived, what they wore and what they looked like". In a way, the preparation for it was unconsciously begun years ago when, as a child, I used to ask questions of my grandmother about the "good old days". She was then the only one in our family to admit that the old days had been good; the others seemed to be all "futurists" and "post-impressionists" of some kind or other. But in studying, more recently, my grandmother's days, I have approached them neither to praise nor to blame—only to taste the joy of understanding the old social order.

To do this was even a more difficult task than I had imagined it to be. I had to fight my way through the accounts of prejudiced, uncritical, and superficial minds—through periodicals, lithogravures, manuscripts, books of travel, and diaries. I turned to foreigners as the most dependable of all the social critics of the period—a period about which Brazilian writers have written either to glorify or to blame, never with a fair spirit of criticism. I found my material in the Hispano-americana of Dr. Oliveira Lima in the Catholic University, Washington, D. C., the New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress. Dr. Oliveira Lima's Library—probably the most select of its kind in America or Europe—has not yet been opened to the public and I owe to his kindness the honor of having been the first investigator to use it.

Some of the facts inserted in this essay were gathered from survivors of the old order, among them Mrs. Richard Rundle, of New York and formerly of Rio de Janeiro. The description of student life in Pernambuco is based on what I heard from Dr. João Vicente Costa, of Pernambuco.

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It is a commonplace that the years 1848–1864 mark, in the history of Brazil, an era of peace, conformity, and decorum in public affairs. The student of the period is impressed by other less obvious features: the sound condition of public finance; the slow but definite material progress; the crude technique of production; the important part played by religion in practically every phase of social life; the disregard in all parts of the Empire, even in Rio de Janeiro, for the commonplaces of public hygiene; the attachment to traditions of which the Brazilian had not learned to be ashamed; the corruption among the clergy; the lack of sap in literature; and the almost total absence of critical thought.

From 1848 to 1856 the Empire increased in economic well being. The “Codigo Commercial”, put into effect in 1850, was a good stimulant for business; so was the law authorizing the Bank of Brazil to issue circulating notes, thus extending facilities for credit. Statistics show that foreign commerce—the export of coffee, sugar, cotton, hides, rum, rosewood, and cattle horns—more than doubled between 1849 and 1856. According to a foreign observer “from 1850 to 1860, inclusive, the great tropical staples of coffee, sugar, cotton, and tobacco, actually increased more than thirty per cent”.<sup>1</sup> Budgetary conditions of the period—so fully described by the Count Auguste van der Straten-Ponthoz in his work *Le Budget du Brésil*—reflect the sanity of the general economic situation, though the mode of taxation was anything but perfect. Oliveira Lima says that by 1860 the Empire “had acquired its full vigor”, after a decade of domestic peace, and of increase in agricultural production and foreign trade.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fletcher in Fletcher and Kidder's *Brazil and the Brazilians*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Oliveira Lima, *Machado de Assis et son oeuvre litteraire*, p. 41.

In their material environment and, to a certain extent, in their social life, the majority of Brazilians of the fifties were in the Middle Ages: the élite only was living in the eighteenth century. Only a few men, such as the emperor himself, and a few women, such as Nisia Floresta, were conscious of the Europe of John Stuart Mill, hoop-skirts, Sir Charles Lyell, George Sand, four-wheeled English carriages, and Pius IX. Politically the English type of government was the model after which a sensible, and even sophisticated, oligarchy, in whose power the stern emperor often intruded like a big moral policeman, governed the country. Among some of those oligarchs such subtleties and nuances of political theory as "what is the nature and what are the limits of the moderating power in a parliamentary monarchy?" were often discussed. But more practical subjects occupied their attention: the better administration of civil justice, the building of railways, the relations with the boisterous republics to the south, the slave trade. They were studious and took their responsibilities seriously. The imperial senate was, during the fifties and early sixties, an assembly of brilliant minds. Machado de Assis has left us a graphic description of the senate he knew in 1860—the senate of the old Marquis of Itanhaem, of Rio Branco, Nabuco de Araujo, Zacarias de Goes—a place where public affairs were discussed in an able, entertaining, sometimes caustic, but always dignified, way.

As in the *ante-bellum* South of the United States, the best intelligences of Brazil in the fifties and sixties were engaged in politics, Literature, sandwiched between politics and journalism, was a very watery and thin filler; no pungency, no original flavor. It is true that in the late fifties, Indianism began to appear in the poems of Gonsalves Dias and the novels of Alencar; but most of it was insincere and full of false notes. As to critical thought there was none in philosophy, literature, or religion; there was some in political writers: Zacarias de Goes, Viscount de Uruguay and, in the late sixties, Tavares Bastos. But it was only in the seventies that a restless group of "young intellectuals" was to arise in Pernambuco, under the shadow of its law school, to color Brazilian life with an infusion of their own youth mixed with much of ill-digested European influences.

In an examination of the economic structure of Brazilian society in the middle of the nineteenth century we find on one side a class of landowners and slaveholders; on the other, the mass of slaves, and between the two a few "petits bourgeois" and small farmers, not counting the bureaucracy and leaving out the mercantile interests—the bulk of which was foreign. A sort of medieval landlordism prevailed. Land was owned by coffee planters in the south, cattle-proprietors in the inland provinces and Rio Grande do Sul, by *senhores de engenho* (sugar planters) in the Northeast, especially in Pernambuco. Along the coast and in scattered points of the interior were extensive monastic estates. The class of small farmers were the "*roceiros*", not a few of whom were colored freedmen. Most of the *petite bourgeoisie* was composed of *marinheiros*, or newly arrived Portuguese. Some of these were able to rise, by their perseverance, from being keepers of kiosks or small grocerships, and *mascates*, or peddlers, to the comfortable merchant class—the fathers of future statesmen, diplomats, and judges. The liberalism of the empire, so eager to recognize individual merit, was favorable to newcomers.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the population of Brazil was, roughly speaking, seven millions. J. L. Maré, in his book *Le Brésil en 1852 et sa colonization future*, estimated it as six to seven millions. In an article published in *O Diário* (Rio de Janeiro), on December 11, 1847, F. Nunes de Souza, a Brazilian statistician, assumed the population of the country to be, then, 7,360,000. Of these he classed 2,120,000 as whites: 1,100,000 as free colored, 3,120,000 as negro slaves, 180,000 as free native African, and 800,000 as Indians. Miscegenation was going on freely. As early as 1818 or 1819 the French naturalist Auguste de Saint-Hilaire found such a mixture of races in São Paulo that he described it as an "étrange bigarrure d'où resultent des complications également embarrassantes pour l'administration et dangereuses pour la morale publique".<sup>3</sup> Alfred R. Wallace found in Para "a most varied and interesting mixture of races". "There is," he writes, "the fresh-colored Englishman, who seems

<sup>3</sup> Saint-Hilaire, *Voyages dans les Provinces de Saint Paul et Saint Catharine*, I. 124.

to thrive as well here as in the cooler climates of his country, the sallow American, the swarthy Portuguese, the more corpulent Brazilian, the merry Negro and the apathetic but finely formed Indian; and between these a hundred shades and mixtures which it requires an experienced eye to detect."<sup>4</sup> The American, C. S. Stewart, U. S. N., who visited Brazil in the early fifties, was surprised at "the fearfully mongrel aspect of the population".<sup>5</sup>

The bulk of the population lived on the coast, but one inland province, Minas Geraes, had become very populous since the eighteenth century. In Nunes de Souza's statistics, Minas Geraes is given 1,130,000 inhabitants. That vast province had been settled by *garimpereiros*, or gold-hunters—men from São Paulo, restless and virile. Saint-Hilaire calls them "*une nuée d'aventuriers*". By the middle of the nineteenth century the once active towns of Minas Geraes were declining or, at least, stagnant. Villa Rica was but the shadow of what it had been. The province was becoming agricultural and its moral conditions, which had been so bad during the gold fever and in the early part of the century, were now improving. The Catholic Church, extending from Mariana the tentacles of its moral discipline, was softening the rough-mannered pioneer, who now said the *Benedicite* before his meals.

São Paulo was perhaps the most prosperous province during the decade 1850–1860. Its population reached in 1847, 800,000—as much as Pernambuco. Its capital had become, as far as material progress goes, one of the best cities in the empire. Its houses were attractive and its streets wide and straight. Around the city there were the *chacaras*, or country-houses, surrounded by *jabuticabeiras* and other fruit trees and farther inland, the *fazendas*, or coffee estates, where symmetrical rows of coffee trees extended for miles. The prosperity of São Paulo during the fifties is explained by the increase in the exports of coffee. In June of 1855, 206,002 bags of coffee were exported from Rio de Janeiro; in June of 1856, 178,444.<sup>6</sup> As to its intellectual

<sup>4</sup> Alfred R. Wallace, *A Narrative of Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Stewart, *The Personal Record of a Cruise*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> "The Brazils", in *The London Times*, August 11, 1856.

activity, which centered in the Law School, São Paulo was inferior to Pernambuco; it was inferior to Pernambuco, to Bahia, and of course to the metropolis, in social life.

The agricultural progress of Pernambuco during the fifties was also marked. Its production of sugar increased from 10,000 tons, in 1821, to 70,000, in 1853,<sup>7</sup> making Recife the greatest sugarmart in the empire. The bulk of the sugar came from those *engenhos*, or sugar-estates, around the Villa das Flores, in the region known as *matta*. From Recife to the river Una there were, by 1855, some three hundred large sugar-plantations. The owners of those estates lived in a sort of baronial style, forming a homogeneous class in respect to their economic interests, social life, and politics. They ruled over their estates, and over the small towns, in a true feudal way. Were not they the descendants of those arrogant planters who expelled to Bahia, in 1666, a captain-general, or colonial governor, sent by the metropolis? With them the aristocratic manner and manners went back for generations. They were descended from some of the best blood of Portugal and it was through their ancestors that the vague thing we call culture first reached Portuguese America. During the forties, fifties, and early sixties the refinement of life and manners came to flower once more in Pernambuco, thanks to that gentleman-scholar, Governor Baron da Boa Vista. The women dressed well; the receptions in the governor's palace were brilliant, and brilliant were the performances in the theater of Santa Isabel, and the ceremonies in the church of Espirito Santo. A writer of the period calls attention to "le luxe, qui commence à prendre un certain développement à Pernambouc."<sup>8</sup>

Bahia was, economically, the rival of Pernambuco. It has some sugar-estates but was more important as a center of cotton and tobacco culture. Manufactures were developing there and an American traveler describes a cotton factory that he visited in Valença—probably the best one then existing in Brazil. In 1851 the revenue of Bahia was 4,784,600 milreis while that of Pernambuco was 4,639,427 milreis.<sup>9</sup> But later on the cholera

<sup>7</sup> William Hadfield, *Brazil, The River Plate and the Falkland Islands*, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Cavallo, *Etudes sur le Brésil*, p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Hadfield, *ut supra*, p. 127.

epidemic made itself felt in Bahia in a more deadly way than anywhere else in Brazil. Many slaves died in the years of 1855 and 1856;<sup>10</sup> hence the economic crisis that followed and affected not only Bahia exports but coffee as well.

To the Brazilian of the fifties the country to the west of Minas Geraes, Pernambuco and Bahia—the *sertão*—was a region of even greater mystery and fear than to the later-day Brazilian. It was free from any policing: law and even Dom Pedro meant nothing to its inhabitants. Taxation among them, for instance, was impossible in those days: no system of tax-gathering was suave enough for their scruples of independence. We are told by an English observer, writing in 1860, of an experiment at collecting duties on hides in the *sertão* of Pernambuco. "The sertanejos caught the miserable tax-gatherer with the same glee that a Galway mob would seize a process-server, tripped him, killed a bullock, sewed him up in it with his head protruding, and sent him back with the Spartan message 'If the emperor wants beef, let his man take it with him' ".<sup>11</sup>

The *sertanejo* of the fifties was even more picturesque than the *sertanejo* of today, whom Euclýdes da Cunha has so vividly described in *O Sertão*. In the fifties he wore an "enormous stock of hair", a "battered steeple-crowned hat", and a cotton shirt and breeches. The Reverend Doctor Fletcher describes the entering of a family of "sertanejos" into Recife, where they came to sell their cotton and hides, having to travel from fifteen to twenty days before reaching the coast. The man rode "perched upon a couple of oblong cotton-bags strapped parallel to his horse's sides, followed by his train of a dozen horses or mules, loaded, in the same way, with cotton or sugar. A monkey, with a clog tied to his waist, surmounts one in place of the driver; parrot and his wife another: and a large brass-throated macaw with a stiff blue coat of feathers another."<sup>12</sup> These caravans were a sight that city children enjoyed watching: I remember

<sup>10</sup> Cawalls says (p. 8) that "on évalue a plus de 60,000 le nombre d'esclaves que le cholera a enlevés dans le Brésil".

<sup>11</sup> *Brazil: Its History, People, Natural Resources*. Anonymous.

<sup>12</sup> Fletcher in Fletcher and Kidder's *Brazil*, p. 522.



having heard my grandmother refer to them as one of the colorful memories of her childhood.

Mention must be made, of course, of Rio de Janeiro. By the middle of the nineteenth century that province was the first in population with 1,500,000 inhabitants. Scattered in it there were foreign colonies, some of which were prospering. They were composed of Germans and German Swiss. That of Petropolis counted 2,565 members. Its condition was good, the colonists specializing in the cultivation of corn and potatoes and in the manufacture of butter and cream cheese. So did the colonists of Nova Friburgo, who were 2,000 in number.<sup>13</sup>

Manufacturing interests were concentrated in Rio de Janeiro, around the *corte*, or the capital of the empire. Of the seventy-two factories that existed in Brazil, for the manufacture of hats, candle, soap, beer, cigars, and cotton, fifty-two were located in the province of Rio de Janeiro. The remaining were distributed as follows: in Bahia ten, Pernambuco four, Maranhao two, and São Paulo, Minas Geraes, Parana, and São Pedro, one each.<sup>14</sup> These manufacturing interests were mostly in the hands of aliens. The labor itself was partly foreign. The porcelain factory in Minas Geraes had expert workers brought from the famous establishments of Saxony.<sup>15</sup> But free negroes and mulattoes were often employed. Fletcher saw in a cotton-factory in Valença, Bahia, "the whole operation of modeling, and finishing, performed by negroes".<sup>16</sup> Even the foreman of the foundry was a Brazilian negro. Negroes became skilful in more delicate industries such as the making of artificial flowers with feathers—an industry of which the French traveler Max Radiguet wrote that it "semble avoir atteint son apogée à Rio Janeiro".<sup>17</sup> Mme. Ida Pfeiffer was surprised to find in the "ateliers" of Rio de Janeiro, "les plus distingués des noirs occupés à confectionner

<sup>13</sup> Full information in regard to the foreign colonies in south Brazil is to be found in an *Appendice* to Van der Stratan-Ponthoz's *Le Budget du Brésil*, Bruxelles, 1854.

<sup>14</sup> Cavallo, *Etudes sur le Brésil*, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Fletcher in Fletcher and Kidder's *Brazil*, p. 499.

<sup>17</sup> Radiguet, *Souvenirs de l'Amérique Espagnole*, p. 255.

des habits, des souliers, des ouvrages de tapisseries, des broderies d'or et d'argent. Plus d'une negresse assez bien habillée travaillait aux toilettes de femmes les plus elegants et aux broderies les plus delicates."<sup>18</sup>

It was in the fifties that the first railways were built in Brazil but only in the seventies did they become a serious factor in the economic and social life of the country. By 1858 the Dom Pedro Railway had only extended twenty-seven miles. Railways were in construction in São Paulo, Bahia, and Pernambuco. But most of the traveling was still done by water, or, when this was impossible, on horse and mule back or by ox cart. Count van der Straten-Ponthoz writing in 1854 remarked that "au Brésil tous les transports s'exécutent péniblement à dos de mulet". The president of the province of Goyaz—we are told by the same author—had to travel for three months to arrive from Rio de Janeiro at the capital of his province. Caravans of goods traveled for five months before reaching the capital of Matto Grosso from Rio de Janeiro.

Steam navigation made notable progress in Brazil during the fifties. It was followed by improvements in the towns it touched. Para, for instance, gained much from the line of regular steamers on the Amazon, inaugurated in 1854. Such luxuries as camphene lights and macadam generally followed steam-navigation. Hence the progress noted by foreign observers in coast and riverside towns. The others were hardly affected by any touch of progress until railways penetrated the country. They remained truly medieval—no public lighting, no street cleaning, no macadam. And medieval they were in their customs and in their relations to the great landowners around whose estates the towns and villages were scattered.

The power of the great planters was indeed feudalistic, their patriarchalism being hardly restricted by civil laws. Fletcher, who traveled through the interior of Brazil, wrote: "The proprietor of a sugar or cattle estate is, practically, an absolute lord." And he adds: "The community that lives in the shadow

<sup>18</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *Voyages autour du Monde*, p. 11.

of so great a man is his feudal retinue: and, by the conspiracy of a few such men, who are thus able to bring scores of lieges and partisans into the field, the quiet of the province was formerly more than disturbed by revolts which gave the government much trouble.”<sup>19</sup> Oliveira Lima says that those communities living in the shadow of the great planters were very heterogeneous: he compares them to the army of lieges that the Portuguese nobles of the eighteenth century kept in their states: *bravi* or rascals, bull fighters, friars, guitarists, etc. The large Brazilian estate was a self-sustaining unit—economically and socially—depending little on the world outside its large wood gates. It had its cane-fields or its coffee-plantations, and plantations of mandioc, black beans, and other produce, for its own consumption. Its population included, besides the owner and his family, *feitores*, or overseers, *vaqueiros*, or shepherds, sometimes a chaplain and a tutor, carpenters, smiths, masons, and a multitude of slaves. Fletcher visited a coffee estate in Minas Geraes which contained an area of sixty-four square miles. Besides the rows of coffee trees he noticed large tracts of mandioc, cotton and sugar, an abundance of cattle, and one hundred and fifty hives with bees. “Of all the articles mentioned above,” Doctor Fletcher informs us, “not one finds its way to the market. They are for the sustenance and clothing of the slaves, of whom the Commendador formerly had seven hundred.”<sup>20</sup> In the large sugar estates of Pernambuco, scattered between Recife and the Una river, and against whose feudalistic powers the revolution of 1848 is said to have been a protest, certain domestic industries developed along with agricultural activities, among them the making of wines from *genipapo*, the making of charqui, or jerked beef, cream cheese, and, of course, all sorts of sweetmeats and cakes. These activities were superintended by the “old missus” herself.

The work people of the plantations were well-fed, and attended to by their master and mistress as a “large family of children”. They had three meals a day and a little rum (*caxaca*) in the morn-

<sup>19</sup> Fletcher in Fletcher and Kidder's *Brazil*, p. 522.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem.*, p. 440.

ing. Their breakfast consisted of *farina* or *pirão*, with fruits and rum; at midday they were given a very substantial meal of meat or fish; in the evening, black beans, rice, and vegetables. On holidays it was customary on certain estates to have an ox killed for the slaves and a quantity of rum was given to make them merry. Then they would dance the sensuous measures of the *batuque* or other African dances or sing or play the *marimba*.

As a rule the slaves were not overworked in the households either in the plantations or in the city. It is true that much was being said in the fifties, of cruel treatment of slaves in Brazil, by the British anti-slavery propaganda. Later on the British dark account of conditions was to be repeated in Brazil by Brazilian anti-slavery orators such as the young Nabuco and Sr. Ruy Barbosa—men inflamed by the bourgeois idealism of Wilberforce as well as by a very human desire for personal glory—and they did it in so emphatic a language that the average Brazilian believes today that slavery was really cruel in his country. The powerful fancy won over reality. For, as a matter of fact, slavery in Brazil was anything but cruel. The Brazilian slave lived the life of a cherub if we contrast his lot with that of the English and other European factory-worker in the middle of the last century. Alfred R. Wallace—an abolitionist—found the slaves in a sugar plantation he visited in North Brazil “as happy as children”. He adds: “They have no care and no wants, they are provided for in sickness and old age, their children are never separated from their wives, except under such circumstances as would render them liable to the same separation, were they free, by the laws of the country.”<sup>21</sup> As to conditions in the south of the Empire, an American observer, unsympathetic and even hostile towards the Brazilians, gives the following account: “As a rule, in the Southern part of Brazil, slaves were fairly treated and generally had much more liberty than was compatible with very efficient service though I have known cases of individual cruelty which have made my blood boil with indignation.”<sup>22</sup> Doctor Rendu wrote that “en général les Brésiliens

<sup>21</sup> Wallace, *A narrative of Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro*, p. 120.

<sup>22</sup> R. Cleary, “Brazil under the monarchy” (manuscript), p. 152.

ne surchargent pas leurs esclaves de travail".<sup>23</sup> The Reverend Walter Colton, U. S. N., found the slaves in Brazil "generally treated with kindness and humanity by their masters".<sup>24</sup> Mme. Ida Pfeiffer, who visited Brazil in the late forties, writes in her famous book: "I am almost convinced that, on the whole, the lot of these slaves is less wretched than that of the peasants of Russia, Poland or Egypt, who are not called slaves."<sup>25</sup> But it is an English clergyman—the Reverend Hamlet Clark, M.A., who strikes the most radical note: "Nay indeed, we need not go far to find in free England the absolute counterpart of slavery: Manighew's London Labour, and London Poor, Dicken's *Oliver Twist*, Hood's *Song of the Shirt* and many other revelations tell of a grinding, flinty-hearted despotism that Brazilian slave-owners never can approach."<sup>26</sup> As Professor Hayes points out, in England, "audiences wept at hearing how cruel masters licked their cowering slaves in Jamaica: but in their own England little Englishmen and Englishwomen ten years old were being whipped to their work," sometimes "in the factories of some of the anti-slavery orators".

At sunset the whistle of the sugar-mill closed the day's work on the Brazilian plantation. The workpeople came then for their last meal, after which they went to bed. But first they came to ask their master's and mistress' blessing: "Benção, nhonho!" "Benção Nhanha!" holding out their right hand. Then the master and the mistress would say: "Deus te abençõe" (God bless you); making at the same time the sign of the cross.

In a typical Brazilian city-home of the higher class—say, the home of a custom-house officer—slaves numbered on the average fifteen or twenty. Since slaves were plentiful, certain necessities, and even luxuries, were produced at home, under the careful oversight of the mistress; cloth was cut and made into dresses, towels and undergarments; wine was distilled; lace and *crivo* (a sort of embroidery) were manufactured. Besides this

<sup>23</sup> Alp. Rendu, *Etudes sur le Brésil*, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Colton, *Deck and Port*, p. 112.

<sup>25</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *Voyage autour du monde*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> Clark, *Letters home from Spain, Algeria and Brazil*, p. 160.

the housewife superintended the cooking, the preserving, the baking of cakes, the care of the sick; taught her children and their black playmates the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ave Maria; kept them from mischief and pathological abnormalities—such as eating clay—against which the “log” or the “tin mask” were sometimes employed as punishments.

Slaves were plentiful. The staff of a large city-house included cooks, those trained to serve in the dining room, wet-nurses, water carriers, footmen, chambermaids—the latter sleeping in their mistresses' rooms and assisting them in the minutest details of their toilette, such as picking lice, for instance. Sometimes there were too many slaves. A lady told Doctor Fletcher that she “had nine lazy servants at home for whom there was not employment” and another one that she could not find enough work to keep her slaves out of idleness and mischief. It is easy to imagine how some housewives became pampered idlers, spending their days languidly in gossiping, or at the balcony, or reading some new novel of Macedo or Alencar. Doctor Rendu had such in mind when he unjustly generalized about the Brazilian women: “. . . elles passent des journées entières a leur fenêtre”.<sup>27</sup> Nor had F. Dabadie seen a Brazilian interior when he stated that the Brazilian ladies were lazy—“si indolentes”, he says, “pour la plupart, qu'elles aimeraient mieux renoncer a toute parure et se condamner a vieillir en chemise sur une natte ou dans un hamac que d'aller acheter dans un magasin les affluttiaux dont elles raffolent”.<sup>28</sup> It is true that the Brazilian lady of the fifties did not go out for her shopping. She was a house prisoner. Moorish prejudices kept her from those pretty shops of fancy goods, bonnets, jewelry, *bijouterie*, which travelers admired so much in Rio de Janeiro, the Italian naval officer Eugenio Rodriguez describing them as “elegantissimi magazini.” But at home she did not stay in her hammock. In a typical home works of all kinds went on during the day. Linen, silk, millinery, fancy goods, were bought from samples and pattern-books, after much running of negro boys

<sup>27</sup> Rendu, *Études sur le Brésil*, page 24.

<sup>28</sup> Dabadie, *Récits et Types Américaines*, p. 104.

from shop to the house: or, in many cases, from the peddler who came once or twice a week, making a noise with his yardstick. It was not necessary to go to the market to buy vegetables, fruit, or eggs since venders of these rural products, as well as of milk, meat, and fish, came to the home. There were itinerant copper-smiths who announced themselves by hitting some old stewpan with a hammer. Even novels were sold at the door. Paulo Barreto tells that Alencar and Macedo—"the best sellers" of the period—had negroes go from house to house, selling their novels in baskets. Therefore, the fact that the Brazilian woman did not go to the shops does not mean that she was too lazy to do her own shopping. She did it. And after the shopping was done in the morning it was she who superintended the various kinds of work going on in the household. The Count de Suzannet, who was anything but pleased with the Brazilian women, remarks that "elles président aux soins du ménage donnant leurs ordres aux negresses ou veillant elles-mêmes à la préparation des mets".<sup>29</sup> Fletcher who, though a Protestant clergyman, enjoyed the intimacy of many a home in Brazil, thought that the Brazilian housewife answered to the description of the "good woman" in the last chapter of Proverbs: "she looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness." Carlos de Laet—the last brilliant mind of a departed order—tells us that "to accuse a lady of not knowing how to manage her household was then the most unpleasant offence to her".<sup>30</sup> Oliveira Lima characterizes the Brazilian housewife of this period as possessing "ability to manage" (*capacidade administrativa*), without which it was impossible to keep such large households going.<sup>31</sup> Others might be quoted to show that in this matter the weighing of evidences reveals an active, rather than an idle woman, as the typical Brazilian housewife in slavery days.

The double standard of morality prevailed in the fifties: the lily-like woman was idolized while incontinence in the man was slightly regarded. It is true that the Emperor Dom Pedro

<sup>29</sup> Suzannet, *Souvenirs de Voyages*, p. 265.

<sup>30</sup> Carlos de Laet, "Triste mas verdade" in *Jornal do Brasil* (undated clipping).

<sup>31</sup> Oliveira Lima, "Nisia Floresta," in *Diário de Pernambuco*, December 4, 1919.

II. made the standards of sexual morality stricter for those who were around him or who aspired to political eminence. He was a sort of Queen Victoria in breeches—only more powerful—and watched the statesmen like a moral detective. It is commonplace that he refused to appoint men to eminent positions on account of irregularities in their private life—a tradition which the Republican leaders found too foolish to maintain. But the emperor's influence was only felt in the high spheres of officialdom. In the large country estates irregularities went on freely, the colored girls constituting a disguised harem where either the master or his sons satisfied their exotic sexual tastes. Doctor Rendu remarked of the Brazilians that "*leur passion pour les femmes ne connaît point de frein; ils s'y abandonnent sans retenue et ne reculent devant aucune tentative pour la satisfaire*". From these relations with slave girls resulted a substantial increase in the number of slaves—an improved slave breed since, in many cases, the male parent was a Portuguese—I mean ethnically, not civilly—of the best blood. From such unions of first-rate men—the gentry—and their slave women sprang those able halfbreeds who, even during the Empire,<sup>32</sup> rose to prominence and have given the Republic some of its best leaders.

In the cities of Brazil of 1850, bachelorhood did not offer the charms it offers in sophisticated centers. But bachelors enjoyed certain licences. Social legislation did not disturb them; neither did the priests who, being bachelors themselves, must have felt an acute "consciousness of kind". Bachelors and widowers even advertised for mistresses, in a suavely disguised way. This sort of publicity shocked an American Puritan, a Doctor Creary. He quotes some of the advertisements in the papers of Rio de Janeiro, one of which is from a "young single Englishman" who wishes "a colored girl to take charge of his house"—a colored girl "who is poor and to whom everything will be given to make her happy".

In his attitude towards his wife the Brazilian of the fifties was a true patriarch of the Roman type. She was given authority

<sup>32</sup> Color constituted no barrier against civil rights. When free, the colored man could go to the ballot and was eligible to parliament.



in the household, but not outside. Outside she was to be, legally and socially, the shadow of her husband. "A promenade below, with the chance of a flirtation, is denied her", the American C. S. Stewart remarks in his book. Pointing out the virtues of the Brazilian matron in the *ancien régime*, of which he is the most eminent survivor, the Count Carlos de Laet says that "she knew how to obey her husband".<sup>33</sup> Monsieur Expilly, a French feminist who visited Brazil in the fifties, was indignant at what he calls "le despotisme paternel" and "la politique conjugale". "La broderie", he writes, "la confection des doces (confitures), le bavardage des negresses, le gaffoune, le maniamment de la chicote et, le dimanche, une visite aux églises, voilà les seules distractions que le despotisme paternel et la politique conjugale permettaient aux jeunes moças et aux inquietes senhoras".<sup>34</sup>

While the woman spent most of her time indoors, the man—the city man—spent most of his, out—in the street, in the plaza, at the door of some French hotel or in his office or warehouse. The condition was much like that in ancient Greece where people thought, with the wise old Xenophon, that "it is not so good for a woman to be out-of-doors as in, and it is more dishonourable for a man to stay in than to attend to his affairs outside". Brazilian men, like the Greeks, enjoyed the easy fellowship of the street and the plaza—and in the street and the plaza they discussed politics, Donizetti, the Aberdeen Bill, and transacted business. We are told by Sampaio Ferraz, in his excellent work "O Molhe de Olinda", that in Pernambuco, during the last half of the nineteenth century, the most important business was transacted outdoors, under the trees of Lingoeta. Lithogravures of the period, which I examined in Oliveira Lima's collection, show the streets—Rua Direita and Largo da Alfandega in Rio, Lingoeta in Pernambuco, and so on—full of groups of men, talking, smoking, taking snuff, while coffee or sugar carriers run with their cargoes, their half-naked bodies shining with oily sweat. The sentiment of home was not strong among the Brazilian men when the patriarchal family was in its full vigor. Nor did they have mundane

<sup>33</sup> Laet, "Triste mas verdade," in *Jornal do Brasil*.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Expilly, *Les Femmes et les Moeurs du Brésil*, p. 372.

clubs—unless if we accept as such the Masonic lodges. The street was their club.

This may serve as an explanation of the fact that the city Brazilians of the fifties did not seem to have attractive homes. Twenty years before a French traveler, Louis De Freycinet, had observed that the Brazilians spent most of their time sleeping, or outdoors, or, sometimes, receiving their friends; therefore they only needed—the Frenchman thought—a reception room and the bed rooms. In the fifties the city houses were practically the same that De Freycinet had seen. They were heavy and solid, like those fat Moorish towers that nothing seems to uproot; their walls were thick, made of bits of stone mixed with mortar. Ewbanks informs us that they were “mostly two stories”. As to the walls he writes that they “are of rough stone coated with a stucco of lime and loam, which makes them appear as if white-washed”. “Some owners”—I am still quoting from Ewbanks—“show their taste by coloring the stucco in panels or otherwise; light blue and pink are favorite tints”.<sup>35</sup> In those old houses, a few of which survive, there were big spouts at the eaves of the roofs, where the rain was *shooted* in the narrow streets.

The plan of the old Brazilian house was the poorest that one can imagine. Indeed, in this respect, it was a masterpiece of architectural stupidity. Doctor Kidder, an American, was entertained in a house in Pernambuco where “the first or ground floor was denominated the *armazem* and was occupied by male servants at night; the second furnished apartments for the counting room, etc.; the third and fourth for parlours and lodging rooms; the fifth for dining-rooms; and the sixth for a kitchen”.<sup>36</sup> Of course such a skyscraper was not the typical residence. But one wonders why the houses were built as if space was scarce and looked gloomy, heavy, fat. Most of the houses of the well-to-do had a carriage-house and a stable on the ground floor, for in the forties and fifties, at least in Rio and Pernambuco, carriages with luxuriously cushioned seats and gorgeously dressed negro postilions, took the place of the old *cadeirinhas*, or palanquins.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Ewbanks, *Life in Brazil*, p. 86.

<sup>36</sup> Kidder in Fletcher and Kidder's *Brazil*, p. 515.

I have the photogravure of the carriage which belonged to a wealthy coffee-trader of Rio de Janeiro—a carriage drawn by four white horses, with a black coachman in the box and a postilion. In Bahia the steepness of the streets prevented the introduction of wheeled-carriages and as late as the seventies palanquins were used there.

As to the furniture of the household—tables, sofas, chairs, marquises, bedsteads—they too were heavy, solid, made of rose-wood, *oleo*, *vinhatico*, and other indigenous woods. Each reception-room had a large sofa at one end and rows of chairs, one from each end of the sofa. They were arranged with a childlike idea of symmetry—I mean as a child places his toy-soldiers in line for a battle—in straight, regular rows. In some houses the sofa and the chairs were adorned with laces and colorful ribbons. A piano was seldom lacking, for as Francis de Castelnau observed in Brazil “dans presque toutes les maisons l’on voit ou l’on entend un piano, souvent même dans les plus chétives”. When visitors came not only were games of romps, such as *pilha tres*, enjoyed, but a sonata or a polka was played at the piano by a lady. It was also *accompanied at the piano* that the young men recited “Oh, guerreiros da taba sagrada!” or “Waterloo, Waterloo, lição sublime!” or “Se eu morresse amanhã”—poems from the favorite bards of the period. Sometimes the master of the house, being a flute or a violin virtuoso, would entertain his visitors. Most of the men in those days played the piano or the violin or the flute. My paternal grandfather—a sugar planter—was a violin virtuoso. The keen taste for music was perhaps what made Brazilian slaveholders kind and gentle.

De Freycinet forgot that Brazilians needed, besides a parlor and many bedrooms, a large dining hall. They had large families and liked to have their friends for dinner. It was on the tables, over the large dishes of fat pork and black beans, of *pirão*, a sort of unctuous pudding which Arthur de Oliveira has celebrated in his colorful prose, of *cangica*, fancy breads, sweetmeats, cakes, and frozen desserts, that the Brazilians showed the best of their patriarchal hospitality. Foreigners were delighted at the delicacies with which the Brazilians loaded their tables, specially

the *doces* and creams of indigenous fruits like oranges, *maracujas*, *goiabas*, mangoes. The most epicurean of them, Max Radiguet, explains that "les fruits les plus exquis et les plus parfumés, savamment combinés avec les ingrédients ordinaires flattent le palais et l'odorat".<sup>37</sup> In most of the houses the desserts were prepared by the mistress herself; she also served the dishes with her own hands.

A very apt custom followed in regard to the dinner guest was to offer him, soon after his arrival, a light coat of linen, silk, or alpaca. A traveler informs us that "whenever a person is invited to a select dinner party it is always expected that he should make his appearance in a coat of sable cloth; but immediately on his arrival he is invited to "take it off" and offered one of fine linen as substitute".<sup>38</sup> This custom is still followed by a few intelligent Brazilians.

In most of the homes the "Benedicite" was said before the meal and "Gratias" after it, the slaves joining in the brief ceremony. After "Gratias" was said, all made the sign of the cross.

Religion played an important part in the family life of Brazil in the middle of the nineteenth century. The home-education, that is, the early training of boys and girls, was very religious. Children were piously taught by their mothers to fear the Almighty Man-God, who watches all that we do and marks in a huge notebook all our sins for future punishment. They were told also stories of the Virgin Mary and her little, plump, rosy baby—the Divine Infant—who grew into the Man of Sorrow and our Savior. They were taught to say the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ave Maria, the Salve Regina, and the catechism. They said their prayers on rising in the morning and on retiring at night. On retiring they went to their parents and all elders present to receive their blessing. At least once during the year the parents took their children to the altar of Holy Communion and to confession.<sup>39</sup> The most religious parents

<sup>37</sup> Radiguet, *Souvenirs de l'Amérique Espagnole*, p. 256.

<sup>38</sup> Warren, *Para*, p. 67.

<sup>39</sup> Laet says in his article "Triste mas verdade", in *Jornal do Brasil*: "Uma vez as menos durante o anno, paes e filhos revistavam a consciencia e juntos se apresentavam a mesa eucharistica."

sent their sons to the parish church to serve the mass as altar-boys. Most of the *engenhos*, had their own chapels, where the family's beloved dead were buried, instead of being taken to the cemetery. Practically every city-house had its *oratorio* with the images in a glassed case, before which the family gathered for worship in a sweet atmosphere of incense and scent of roses.

Home discipline was based on the fear of the Lord, but when this failed a whip was vigorously used. It was often too severe. Boys of fifteen were chastised for offenses that a latter-day parent would regard slightly. An unmarried son of twenty odd years would not dare to smoke in the presence of his father. As to the girls they never joined their elders in conversation unless specially invited to do so.<sup>40</sup> The slaves were beaten when found in mischief, and punished with the "log" or the "thin mask" when caught in injurious vices. The mistress of the house always kept a whip. The French feminist Expilly placed the handling of the whip (*le management de la chicote*) among the occupations of a Brazilian matron.

At eight or nine the girl was sent to a religious boarding school and kept there until she was thirteen or fourteen. There her training, begun at home, was continued. She was trained in that fine art—the art of being a woman. Music, dancing, embroidery, prayers, French, and sometimes English, a thin layer of literature—such were the elements of a girls' education in the boarding school. She came back a very romantic, and sometimes bewitching, little creature, reading Sue, Dumas, and George Sand, besides the gossiping *pacotilhas* such as *A Marmota* and Alencar's saccharine, but often erotic, *folhetins*. And how she could pray! And how she could dance! The dances of the period were the quadrille, the lanciers, and the polka; to dance them well, to be light as a feather and tiny as a piece of lace, was the highest ideal of a girl—I was told by a lady who took dancing lessons from the same teacher as Princess Isabel.

Ladies bloomed early. The years of giddy childhood were short. At fourteen or fifteen the girl dressed like a lady. Docil-

<sup>40</sup> Laet says: "As meninas . . . nunca levantavam a voz em presença dos mais velhos, nem tomavam parte na conversações se a isso não foram convidadas."

ity, and even timidity, was considered a grace. The girl was trained to be timid or, at least, to look timid before people—as timid as a little boy before the circus elephant. The Brazilian girl of the fifties was everything that the so called “very modern” girl is not. “Perhaps they were too timid”—Carlos de Laet writes of the girls of that period—“but they were adorable in their timidity”.<sup>41</sup> Those very timid girls were playful and talkative when given a chance. Max Radiguet tells of the custom of the Brazilian society girls going to the imperial chapel in Rio de Janeiro, where an excellent orchestra assisted by a choir of Italian sopranis played every Friday evening. There “pendant toute la durée de ce concert religieux les femmes accroupées sur leur caire de tapisserie prenaient sans scrupule des sorbets et des glaces avec les jeunes gens qui venaient converser avec elles dans le lieu saint”. When such merry rendezvous, in the shadow of the church, were not possible—and the custom was discontinued just as dances in the churches were discontinued—love-making had to be even more platonic. There was, for instance, love-making by means of a fan—that is, girls could make their fans speak a particular language of love which all lovers were supposed to understand”. It all depended on how the fan was held”. an old lady explained to me while her tapering, white fingers handled a delicate fan in a thousand and one ways.

But as a rule marriage did not result from romantic lovemaking. The man whom the girl married in her early teens was seldom her own choice. He was her parents', or her father's, choice. An English traveler describes how betrothals were made: “Some day the father walks into the drawing room, accompanied by a stranger gentlemen, elderly or otherwise. ‘Minha Filha’, he remarks, ‘this is your future husband.’”<sup>42</sup> Sometimes the “future husband” was a pleasant surprise—a pale youth of twenty-three or twenty-five, a ruby or an emerald sparkling from his forefinger, his moustaches perfumed, his hair smooth, oily . . . a hero who had escaped from some bright German oleogravure

<sup>41</sup> “. . . talvez demasiadamente acanhadas, mas adoráveis mesmo nessa timidez.”

<sup>42</sup> *Brazil: Its History, People, Natural Productions*, p. 175.

or from the pages of a novel. And romantic love developed between the contracting parties. But other times the "future husband" was some fat, solid, newly-rich Portuguese, middle-aged, his neck short and his hands coarse. Perhaps a very fine person—inside; but what a death-blow for a sentimental girl of the fifties. And yet she often accepted him—the pot-bellied one—such a marriage being nothing more than a business partnership. Unfortunate marriages of the latter type became a favorite theme with Brazilian writers of fiction in the sixties and seventies, Guimaraes' *Historia de Uma Moça Rica* being typical of that literature. But one should be discriminating in the matter: some marriages arranged by the girl's parents were as happy as marriages ordinarily are.

Early marriages meant early procreation. At fifteen a girl was generally a mother. Sometimes she was a mother at fourteen and even thirteen. The Reverend Walter Colton wrote in his diary: "A Brazilian lady was pointed out to me to-day who is but twelve years of age, and who has two children, who were frolicking around her steps. . . . ." And he adds: ". . . ladies here marry extremely young. They have hardly done with their fictitious babies, when they have the smiles and tears of real ones."<sup>43</sup> As a consequence, girls faded early, having tasted in a hurry the joy of careless youth.

The boy, too, was born middle-aged. Dom Pedro's prematurity may be taken as typical. He was made an emperor at fifteen, and he was then very thoughtful and serious: at twenty he was an old man. Youth flew from him in a gallop. Brazilian education favored then, more than in a later day, the prematurity of the boy. Very early he was sent to the *collegio*, where he lived and boarded. Though his home might be a street or two off, very seldom—usually once a month—was he allowed to go there. He often got from home boxes of cakes and bon-bons, but no such things as toys. Toys were for little boys; he was nine or ten, nearly a man. As a rule he studied hard his Latin grammar, his rhetoric, his French classics, his sacred history, his geography. When that big occasion—the final

<sup>43</sup> Colton, *Deck and Port*, p. 108.

examinations—came, he shone, answering well all that Padre So-and-So asked about Horace, Noah, Rebecca, rules of punctuation, the verb *amare*; and all that some other teacher asked about Racine, Vesuvius, and what not. Then his father sent him a present: *The Lusiadas* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He went to mass on Sundays, sometimes acting as altar-boy dressed in a scarlet cloak, and though he was little more than kneehigh, he wore in the street a "stiff black hat" and carried a cane. Doctor Fletcher writes of the Brazilian boy of the fifties: ". . . he is made a little old man before he is twelve years of age, having his stiff black hat, standing collar and cane; and in the city he walks along as if everybody were looking at him, and as if he were encased in corsets. He does not run, or jump, or trundle hoops, or throw stones, as boys in Europe and North America."<sup>44</sup> In the *collegio*, besides "the ordinary rudiments of education", he learns, Doctor Fletcher writes "to write a 'good hand', which is a universal accomplishment among the Brazilians; and most of the boys of the higher classes are good musicians. . . ."<sup>45</sup> The French physician, Doctor Rendu, vents upon the Brazilian boy his caustic humor: "A sept ans", he writes, "le jeune Brésilien a déjà la gravité d'un adulte, il se promène majestueusement, une badine à la main, fier d'une toilette que le fait plutôt ressembler aux marionnettes de nos foires qu'à un être humain".<sup>46</sup> I have seen photographs of Brazilian boys in the sixties: sweet, seraphic-looking creatures, curled, oiled, dressed like grown-ups, trying to look like old men.

At fifteen or sixteen the boy finished his studies in the *collegio*. It was time to go to the professional school. Here, as in the girls' betrothal, it was the father's or family's choice that generally prevailed. The tendency was to scatter the boys in different schools, so that the family would be represented in different professions. One was picked to go to Pernambuco or São Paulo to study law or diplomacy; another to enter the medical school; a third to be a cadet in the military school; a fourth to go

<sup>44</sup> Fletcher in Fletcher and Kidder's *Brazil*, p. 176.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Rendu, *Etudes sur le Brésil*, p. 14.



to the seminary. Among the most pious families it was considered a social; as well as a moral, failure not to have a son studying for the priesthood. Sometimes the youngest son, though of no churchly turn of mind, was the scapegoat. The family simply had to have a *padre*. As to the stupid son, who could not make good anywhere, the sensible parents sent him to business, which was looked down upon by gentlemen.

The flower of the family was picked for the law school—the law school being the training-ground, not for magistracy only, but for the parliament and the cabinet also, and for diplomacy. There were two law schools—that of Olinda, in Pernambuco, and that of São Paulo. Writing from São Paulo in 1855 Doctor Kidder said of its law school: "It is here and at the Pernambuco Law School (which contains three hundred students in the regular course) that the statesmen of Brazil receive that education which so much better fits them for the Imperial Parliament and the various legislative assemblies of their land than any preparatories that exist in the Spanish-American countries".<sup>47</sup>

The "regular course", to which Doctor Kidder refers, came after a sort of pre-law course which included Latin, geometry, rational and moral philosophy, and other subjects. The "regular course" extended over a period of five years, the following subjects being studied: philosophy of law, public law, analysis of the imperial constitution, Roman law, diplomacy, ecclesiastical law, civil law, mercantile and maritime law, political economy, and theory and practice of general law.

Some of the professorships were occupied by men of notable talent, such as Paula Baptista and Aprigio Guimaraes—the latter a Christian Socialist. Others were notable for their excesses of Catholic piety rather than for sound scholarship and sheer love of truth. In the law school of Pernambuco, Trigo de Loureiro and Braz Florentino—who wrote a book against civil marriage—represented the latter. Religious piety—not always the excess of it—permeated the life of faculty and student body alike, making it colorful and even hieratic. Grave professors

<sup>47</sup> Kidder in Fletcher and Kidder's *Brazil*, p. 372.

and students trying to look as grave as possible took part in the big processions, all bearing candles and shuffling, hieratically. Frock-coated professors, dressed in their *opas*, went to hear the sermons in the Church of the Espirito Santo. The late Professor Camara, of the Pernambuco law school, in his very entertaining chronicle for 1904,<sup>48</sup> which smells so little of the official and so much of the literary, summarizes the description he found in the school's archives of a procession in 1854, promoted by the students, who had organized themselves into a brotherhood—*Irmandade do Bom Conselho*. In this solemn procession, among the kneeling people, the young men carried an image to the Church of the Third Order of São Francisco, preceded by the Bishop of Olinda in gorgeous purple satin, by the president of the school, and the professors, also members of a brotherhood.

But this churchly atmosphere in the day time did not prevent most of the students from being merry, boisterous, and even wicked, after sunset. They did not care a rap for rowing or any ball game—not even for cock-fighting, which some of their elders enjoyed. Making love to actresses was their favorite sport. There were generally two rival actresses, like Candiani and Delmatro, in São Paulo, and Eugenia Camara and Adelaide Amaral, in Pernambuco, and surrounding each, a fervent group of admirers—some platonic, some not. Each group had a “poet” instead of a “cheer leader”, and oratorical duels were fought in the theaters. Tobias Barretto and Castro Alves excelled, in the sixties, in that sort of mental sport. Tobias made probably the strongest impression, with his crashing hand as if ready for a blow, his white teeth flashing, his eyes inflamed. He headed the group of the actress Adelaide do Amaral; Castro Alves, that of Eugenia Castro. Eugenia soon became the student's mistress and on her “he spent on two or three nights his monthly allowance”.<sup>49</sup>

It was in the shadow of the theater that the young men enjoyed themselves, writing verses to actresses, fighting for actresses,

<sup>48</sup> Doctor Phaelante da Camara, “Memoria Historica”, in “*Revista Academica da Faculdade de Direito do Recife*, Anno XII.

<sup>49</sup> Xavier Marques, *Vida de Castro Alves*, p. 127, *apud* Afranio Peixoto's *Poeira da Estrada*, p. 221.

spending money on merry suppers with actresses. For their elders, also, the theater was the center of amusement—the theater and the church. Rio de Janeiro had three fairly good theaters, with which such sophisticated Europeans as Radiguet were not at all displeased. Dabadie wrote in 1858 that “l’art dramatique et l’art lyrique sont dignement encouragés a Rio”, describing the São Pedro Theater as “un des plus vastes et plus beaux que nous ayons vu”.<sup>50</sup> The operas of Meyerbeer, Verdi, Donizetti, and other composers were sung and performed there, in the presence of the emperor. In Pernambuco, the opera house had found an excellent patron, in the forties, in the governor Baron da Boa Vista. Doctor Fletcher points out in his book that “the first musicians go to Brazil”. “Thalberg”, he adds, “triumphed at Rio de Janeiro before he came to New York”.<sup>51</sup>

The *entrudo*—the ancestor of the modern carnival—was an occasion of great joy, being a festival of all classes. It consisted, then, in throwing at each other “limas de cheiro”, or small, colored waxen balls filled with perfumed water. In Rio there were masquerade balls in the theaters: São Januario, Lyrico, São Pedro, Gymnasio. The Paraizo Theater opened its doors for all the people. So brutal was then the *entrudo* that basins and tubes of water were used, besides the *limas*.<sup>52</sup>

Most of the religious festivals and processions were marked by the note of joy. Ewbanks remarks in his journal that the religious festivals “constitute the chief amusement of the masses—are their principal sports and pastimes, during which the saints themselves come out of their sanctuaries and, with padres and people, take part in the general frolic”.<sup>53</sup> The “general frolic” was carrying the saints in procession—processions that shuffled through the streets from one church to another: a fat bishop crowned with a miter under his canopy, blessing people to the left and the right: priests, friars; little girls dressed as cherubs or *anginhos*; a band that suddenly played a martial tune while,

<sup>50</sup> F. Dabadie, *A Travers l’Amérique du Sud*, p. 20.

<sup>51</sup> Fletcher in Fletcher and Kidder’s *Brazil*, p. 163.

<sup>52</sup> Mello Moraes, Filho, *Festas e Tradições*.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Ewbanks, *Life in Brazil*, p. vii.

moved by the music, negro rascals danced in front of the procession, sometimes also quarreling and cutting each other with knives. The procession of Saint George—the patron saint of Brazil—was followed by dances and all sorts of merrymaking. The days of Saint John, Saint Peter, and Saint Anthony—the latter a full colonel in the Brazilian Army—were celebrated with outbursts of popular joy. So was Christmas, when presents of turkeys, pigs, cakes, and slaves were exchanged. The festival of Saint Ephigenia, a sort of black Madonna, was enjoyed to the utmost by the colored folks, whose “consciousness of kind” was ably aroused by the priests.

Besides the procession of the “Dead Lord”, when the image of Jesus as a corpse was carried among the silent kneeling of all, the fanatics, wearing crowns of thorns, maltreated their half-naked bodies, the only sad procession was that of “*Encomendação das Almas*”. It had even a touch of *macabrezza*—of pathological delight in grief and suffering. It took place at midnight. Men dressed in somewhat the same manner as the knights of the American Ku Klux Klan and carrying paper lanterns went through the shadowy, silent streets, serenading people. One of them went ahead bearing aloft a large cross. In that macabre serenade they chanted prayers for the souls suffering in purgatory—the souls of dead prisoners and of men dead in the sea.

In the towns of the interior there were certain crude attempts to perform mystery plays. The personages in those plays were the Devil, the Capital Sins, the Holy Father, the Virgin Mary, Saint Peter, Judas, etc. A contemporary writer says of those rustic plays, that they lacked any literary form but sometimes one would find in them “very amusing scenes” and “expressions full of wit and humor”.<sup>54</sup>

Religion played, as these hints have probably indicated, a prominent part in the amusements of the rustics and, to a certain extent, of all classes. It was also the backbone of organised charities. By tolerating and even encouraging superstitions, it did harm to the physical as well as the moral health of the people;

<sup>54</sup> Carvalho, *Etudes sur le Brésil*, p. 38.

it was through its hospitals, agencies of social charity, and the devotion of its nuns that it redeemed itself. Among the masses the most superstitious ideas concerning diseases—its prevention and treatment—prevailed. A foreign observer writes: "Ancient cures—worthy of Pliny—are still in vogue. Earthworms fried alive in olive oil, and applied warm as a poultice, remove *whilows*, which are common among blacks and whites".<sup>55</sup> The same author remarks: "I suppose there is hardly a Roman Catholic female in Brazil, from the Empress to a negress, who does not guard against invisible foes by wearing in contact with her person a coup of diminutive shields".<sup>56</sup> Bone *figas* and pieces of "holy rock" were also used against "evil eye" and diseases. Superstitions penetrated within the walls of hospitals and killed their inmates. Both Ewbanks and Radiguet tell the story of an inmate of the Lazaros Hospital—an institution in Rio de Janeiro for the treatment of diseases of the leprous type—who submitted to the experiment of being cured of his leprosy by the bite of a poisonous snake. The snake was brought but so repulsive were the gangrened parts of the man that the reptile shrank from the contact. The man then squeezed the snake, was bitten and died in twenty-four hours. But while superstitions were rampant there were institutions, under Catholic control, where good care was taken of the sick and unfortunate. They were not sectarian, but open to all. The following description, by a Protestant, of the Misericordia Hospital in Rio de Janeiro reminds one of a propaganda pamphlet of the Y. M. C. A. "Its doors are open at all hours, night and day, to the sick of both sexes, of all religions and of every country and color, without any forms or condition of admittance: all receive gratuitously the ablest medical attendance and the best nursing and care."<sup>57</sup> Most of the religious brotherhoods provided for social assistance and charity, maintaining hospitals, old people's homes, and distributing money to distressed families. The Brazil of the fifties was full of beggars—beggars in the streets. Some of them were old negro slaves, suffering from leprosy who

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Ewbanks, *Life in Brazil*, p. 247.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>57</sup> Stewart, *Brazil and La Plata*, p. 229.

were sent out by their masters to excite the pity of the charitable with their putrid, gangrened wounds. There were also beggars who had nothing on earth the matter with them—except laziness. Radiguet met one of these parasites in Rio, who was taken through the streets in a hammock, hung from a bamboo which two negro slaves supported on their shoulders. The French traveler asked him why he did not sell his two slaves to which the beggar replied, his dignity offended: “Senhor, I am asking you for money, not for advice”.

It is amazing how the Brazilians of the fifties managed to live in such miserable conditions of dirt and bad smell as they did. There was practically no public hygiene to speak of. It is in a semi-official outline of the history of public health services in Brazil that the following description appears, of Rio de Janeiro in the middle of the nineteenth century: “A filthy city, in which, it may be said, there was no air, no light, no sewers, no street cleaning; a city build upon bogs where mosquitos freely multiplied”.<sup>58</sup> Mme. Ida Pfeiffer saw, as she walked through the streets of Rio, carcasses of dogs, cats, and even a mule, rotting. She also refers to “le manque complet d’égouts”—the complete lack of sewers. This condition was common to the other cities of the empire—even to Pernambuco, where the Dutch had left a touch of their cleanliness. Charles Darwin, who was there in the thirties, writes of its filthy streets and offensive smells, comparing it to oriental towns. In all the towns of the empire the removal of garbage, ashes, decaying matter, and vegetables, and human excrements was made in the crudest and also the most picturesque way. Those wastes were put in pipes or barrels, nicknamed *tigres*, and carried on the heads of slaves who dumped them into rivers, the seashore, and alleys. Sometimes as a witness referred to a later-day Brazilian hygienist,<sup>59</sup> “the bottom of the barrel would cast off, the content soiling both the carrier and the street”. The decaying material was left near the bridges or on the seashores, flocks of carrion crows being depended upon to do

<sup>58</sup> Placido Barbosa e Cassio Barbosa de Rezende, *Os Serviços de Saude Publica no Brasil, especialmente na cidade de Rio de Janeiro de 1808 a 1907*, I. p. 66.

<sup>59</sup> Doctor Octavio de Freitas.

the work of scavengers. The removal of the garbage and human waste was generally made after the church bells rang "ten o'clock". In Pernambuco the *tigres* were emptied from the bridges into the rivers Capibaribe and Beberibe;<sup>60</sup> in Rio they were taken on the heads of slaves to be emptied "into certain parts of the bay every night, so that walking in the streets after 10 o'clock is neither safe nor pleasant". This quotation is from Ewbanks who adds: "In this matter Rio is what Lisbon is and what Edinburg used to be".

As there were no sewers to carry off the drainage there was no plumbing in the houses. The system of water supply was that of the *chafariz*, or public fountain. There was a constant dashing to and fro of big negro water carriers, taking water for the houses, sometimes to the third or fourth floor, where the kitchen was located. Those water carriers worked harder, perhaps, than any other class of slaves; for Brazilians made free use of water, thus making up in personal cleanliness what was lacking so painfully in public hygiene. Next to his hot coffee and his snuff, a Brazilian loved a hot bath best of all. Everywhere—in cities and in the great as well as the humble houses of the interior—water, soap, and a large clean towel welcomed a guest. On examining statistics of the period, I found that more than one third of the seventy-two factories then existing in the empire were soap factories.

Though there was no plumbing in the houses and bathtubs were unknown, rich and poor took a sheer joy in bathing. Poor people bathed in rivers, under the public eye. Landing in Para, the American, John Esaias Warren, was attracted to the freedom with which people bathed and swam in the river. "The first spectacle which arrested our attention", he writes, "was that of a number of persons of both sexes and all ages, bathing indiscriminately together in the waters of the river, in a state of entire nudity." And his comment is: "The natives of Para are very cleanly and indulge in daily ablutions; nor do they confine their baths to the dusky hours of the evening but may be seen swimming about the public wharfs at all hours of the day."<sup>61</sup> While the well-to-do in

<sup>60</sup> Alfredo de Carvalho, *Phrases e Palavras*, p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Warren, *Para*, p. 9.

the cities used "gamellas" or large wooden bowls for their ablutions those in the country states—gentlemen and ladies alike—went to the nearest stream where they could also enjoy a good swim. The suburban *chacaras* in Pernambuco, along the Capibaribe river, had crude bathhouses made of coconut palms. There the ladies undressed and then dipt into the water in free, white, nakedness, like happy mermaids.

It was customary to wash one's hands before and after a meal, the slaves bringing bowls with beautifully embroidered towels. Doctor Fletcher noticed this in Rio as well as in the interior of Minas, where he traveled in an oxcart. Not many years before Saint-Hilaire had been delighted at the apostolic simplicity with which the small farmers in Minas Geraes came themselves with a basin and a towel to wash their guest's feet before he went to bed. Children had their feet washed by their mothers or negro nurses before going to bed. On this occasion their feet were also examined, so that *bichos de pe* might be extracted with a pin, if found.

But all this free use of water and soap did not mean that personal cleanliness was absolute. The gentlemen, for instance, were given to excesses in the taking of snuff. They took a pinch of it every ten minutes or so. As to the ladies, most of them had lice in their hair. There is hardly a Brazilian whose grandmother was free from lice. To have them picked by the deft fingers of their maids was even a pleasure which some of the most fashionable ladies enjoyed. This sort of tolerance towards lice among the Brazilian ladies was inherited from their Portuguese grandmothers, Portugal being—according to an English traveler who visited that country in the latter part of the eighteenth century—"perhaps the richest country in lice".

The fifties were in Brazil a period of great mortality. There were two epidemics—yellow fever and cholera. The yellow fever was very deadly, specially among foreigners, in 1850, 1852, 1853, and 1854. The cholera epidemic reached its zenith in 1856. During it slaves died like flies. The terrible pest scattered grief throughout the country and among all classes. Sylvio Romero,



who was then a child, has written a short but vivid account of the effect of the cholera upon a plantation in the north.

Religion, which helped Brazilians to laugh, to go through sickness, even to flirt, also helped them to die. Good Catholics, they passed away holding a candle and murmuring the names of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. When one became desperately ill his or her family sent for the priest, who came in white lace, followed by his acolyte and by friends of the dying one and pious persons—all chanting dismally through the streets. Funerals were pompous but with a touch of humorous—I am using the adjective in its most refined sense—grotesqueness. Children's corpses were buried in scarlet or blue coffins, and dressed as cherubs or angels, with wings and their hair arranged in locks. When supplementary locks were required the undertaker supplied them—"locks as well as rouge for the cheeks and pearl-powders for the neck and arms". Ewbanks remarks: "Fond of dress while living, Brazilians are buried in their best, except when from religious motives other vestments are preferred. Punctilious to the last degree, they enforce etiquette on the dead."<sup>62</sup> Yes, they enforced etiquette on the dead, and vanity besides etiquette. Generals were gorgeously dressed in their full uniforms, still with embroideries of gold; statesmen, in full dress, with all sorts of glittering stars, crosses, and ribbons of orders of nobility; priests, in their magnificent silk robes; maids, in white dresses; with green chaplets of white flowers and blue ribbons. Members of religious brotherhoods dressed as saints—Saint Francis, for instance. Before the coffin was closed, prayers were said by the priest; then—a shuffling of feet, hysterical cries of distressed women, the shrill laments of slaves, and the dead was taken to the cemetery or the church.

GILBERTO FREYRE.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Ewbanks, *Life in Brazil*, p. 67.

<sup>63</sup> Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Political Science, Columbia University.

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